

gizmo

THE TETRA SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA: CUSTOM ASSISTIVE DEVICES

A community of people coming together to help one another



CLEAN SWEEP: ROBIN DE GOUTIERE DESIGNED AND BUILT CURLING BRACE POSTS FOR TETRA CLIENTS AARON GELOWITZ, KIM EGGER, RENUKA SENARATNE AND MARNEY SMITHIES.

TETRA NATION

TETRANATION – a celebration of the people who have made three decades of solutions to physical barriers possible, and we are celebrating by recognizing and highlighting our volunteers' hard work and compassion.

The TetraNation campaign celebrates the 30th anniversary of the Tetra Society of North America, a milestone only possible because of tireless volunteers and coordinators in communities across Canada. Together we have worked with determination to make a positive impact, and over the years, local staff and volunteers have increased inclusion and accessibility through creative solutions that help people with physical disabilities to overcome mobility barriers.

The TetraNation video campaign was designed to bring much-deserved recognition to local Tetra volunteers, who in just the last few years created 975 gizmos across Canada. Video clips on the campaign page tetranation.org illustrate the ingenuity and heart behind every device, and by the end of the campaign on April 30, there were over 7,000 views of featured gadgets. In this issue, join us in celebrating the three gadgets that received the most ThumbsUP! during the campaign.

TIME FOR CURLING!

The winning video features our Tetra volunteer, Surrey, BC resident and retired marine engineer Robin de Goutiere who designed and built curling brace posts for Tetra clients Aaron Gelowitz, Kim Egger, Renuka Senaratne and Marney Smithies. Since retiring, Robin decided that it was time to give back to the community.

"I learned that I always need to have a purpose in life," said Robin de Goutiere.

As a hobby machinist, Robin already had a small machine shop in his house where he built telescopes, eyepieces, and other astronomical gears. Learning about the volunteering opportunity at Tetra through his daughter, Robin joined Tetra and

brought his electrical, mechanical and general engineering skills along with an innovative perspective. Even though it has been only a year since he started volunteering at Tetra, he has already completed more than 20 projects!

The curling adaptations that are featured in the video are built according to different mobility conditions – paraplegia, tetraplegia and lupus – and each mobility condition widely varies among themselves. Balance, to a greater or lesser degree, affects all of the curlers. Robin manually bent one-inch pipe and made it into a shepherd's hook shape. He covered the pipe with foam insulation which takes the diameter up to three inches, to give them more to hang on to. The customized adaptations that he came up with included push poles, pole holders, and braces for balance.

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TETRA SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA INDEPENDENCE, FREEDOM & ACCESS

Tetra is a registered charity that enables people with disabilities to overcome barriers in the physical landscape. We recruit technically skilled and compassionate volunteers who work one-on-one with individuals requiring custom engineering solutions. The completed gizmos empower people with disabilities to live independent and active lives. Know of someone in need of a custom assistive device, or interested in sharing your skills and time as a volunteer? Call us at 604-688-6464 or (toll free) 1-877-688-8762.

TETRA NATION

VIEW WINNING VIDEOS
AT TETRANATION.ORG

In this issue, join us in celebrating three gadgets that received the most ThumbsUP! during the campaign.

TIME FOR CURLING cont. from page 1

As with many Tetra volunteers, it's more than skill that is invested with the time and energy of creating and building assistive devices, it's also infused with the hope of making access and inclusion more of a reality. As Renuka said, "It was a thoughtful touch to also put our name on all the equipment. Although we are beginner curlers we look like professionals. When you have appropriate equipment one can't help but be inspired to play well."

"I LEARNED THAT I ALWAYS NEED TO HAVE A PURPOSE IN LIFE."

— ROBIN DE GOUTIERE

With a bit of support and a sense of inspiration, there is no telling what can happen next! Marney, who had played some able-bodied sports before her injury at age 16 added that "The group of us got together saying we've got to get out and find things to do over the winter." They built on this idea and they formed the South Fraser Active Living Group (SFALG), a club to promote healthy living for people with disabilities.

The video shows all the team members curling as they wish and enjoying their day! "Thank you Robin and Tetra for creating an opportunity for me to participate on a team sport with friends," said Kim. "The psychological benefits of becoming more active and accomplishing something that seemed 'almost impossible' the first time I tried have transferred to other aspects of my life. I've always believed that where there is a will there is a way but I never thought I would reach my goal so quickly! When Kim's brother saw the team's photos, he commented, "That's the 18-year-old Kim I knew!"

We congratulate Robin on his unique solution for the curling team!



ThumbsUP!

CHEERS TO INNOVATION: A CUSTOM-DESIGNED WINE GLASS HOLDER MAKES IT EASIER FOR GAILE TO SOCIALIZE AND MINGLE AT SOCIAL EVENTS WITHOUT SPILLING A DROP.

GAILE'S WINE GLASS HOLDER

Spend just five minutes with Gaile Lacy and you will understand why her dynamic and friendly demeanor garners so many invitations to social events! She uses a scooter for mobility, and whenever she goes to a party or a reception she experienced a similar challenge – balancing her plate and wine glass at the same time!

TetraNation first runner up, David Spears, created a wine glass holder customized to Gaile's scooter. A Tetra volunteer since 2015, David, who has contributed to more than 30 projects, installed the hands-free holder under the seat of the scooter and made it easy to access and remove when not in use. This hands-free device helps Gaile to

socialize and mingle at social events without worrying she might spill her glass!

Before dedicating his time to Tetra, David volunteered as a coach for his kids in three different sports during their childhood, and then with the North Vancouver Rotary Club for several years. He was again looking to volunteer in a capacity that had direct involvement and impact.

"I missed the 'warm and fuzzy' feeling that comes from directly helping others," says David Spears.

His friend, Jay Drew, convinced him to come to a Tetra meeting. That's when David discovered he could apply his mechanical engineering background along with his skills as a handyman to make life better for people with physical disabilities. At first he primarily focused on wood-constructed projects or simpler metal projects, but as he gathered more metal fabricating equipment his projects became increasingly sophisticated, an evolution that has been both challenging and rewarding. In fact, the wine glass holder was his first project!

David chose Gaile's project because it was quite close to home both geographically and personally; the client's disability came from

CONGRATULATIONS TETRANATION WINNERS!

- ROBIN DE GOUTIERE, SURREY BC
- DAVID SPEARS, NORTH VANCOUVER, BC
- MIKE MCNALLY (WITH SARAH MATSON AND DANIELLE HAYES), HAMILTON, ON



4-WHEELER: 7-YEAR-OLD ROWAN CAN NOW WALK AND PLAY OUTDOORS WITH HIS FRIENDS.



"I MISSED THE 'WARM AND FUZZY' FEELING THAT COMES FROM DIRECTLY HELPING OTHERS."

— DAVID SPEARS

ROWAN'S STEPS TO INDEPENDENCE

And last but not least, the TetraNation second runner up accolades went to a team effort to help Rowan, our bubbly 7-year-old client with cerebral palsy. Rowan wanted to walk and play outdoors with his friends, but there wasn't a walker that would allow him to walk independently.

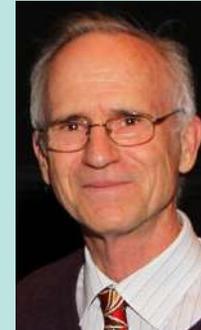
Rowan needs to develop his leg strength and support his upper body, so Sarah Matson and Danielle Hayes assembled a tough and stable frame with a wheel at each corner that was welded together by Mike McNally.

"I enjoy designing and making useful things. Tetra provides opportunities for that activity and hopefully helps others in need," says Mike McNally.

Danielle explains: "The family had a spare walker and we replaced the bottom part with something more stable so it could be used outside. The existing upper half clamps into place, and can be put back into the original walker if required."

Mike, who has been a Tetra volunteer for over 10 years and participated in more than 60 projects, adjusted the rear wheels to turn in a single direction so Rowan won't have difficulty to stay in a straight line. Once Rowan gets stronger and more used to the walker they can free the rear wheels to turn in all directions.

Sarah, from what the staff affectionately refer to as Team Rowan, began volunteering with Tetra because she values the mission. "Having a resource where people can go to get the assistive device they need when it doesn't already exist or is priced too high for them to access fills a huge need," she said. Sarah also has an interest in conceptualizing devices



"I ENJOY DESIGNING AND MAKING USEFUL THINGS THAT HOPEFULLY HELPS OTHERS IN NEED."

— MIKE MCNALLY

and working with the people who can actually make them happen.

When asked to share her favourite memory during the project, her reply would be relatable for anyone: "It would have to be the moment when I saw the video of Rowan using the walker at his cottage for the first time. Rowan and his family had identified being able to run with his cousins at the cottage as their main priority. To see it come to fruition was pretty satisfying. The smile on his face and the joy in his eyes was unforgettable!"

Rowan and his family shared another special moment in the TetraNation video, when Rowan takes his first solo walk with his girlfriend at the cottage! We see him walking independently and in control of his movements.

Just like Rowan, we thank our volunteers for their collaborative effort on this amazing project!

We truly appreciate all of our volunteers and clients for their valuable contributions to the videos. Every assistive device is unique in the way that it is designed, built and used. Through the TetraNation campaign, we aim to share these inspiring outcomes and celebrate overcoming physical barriers.

We are a community of people coming together to help one another. Our biggest mission is to inspire people with disabilities to re-imagine what's possible and to get them closer to new possibilities.

polio, something Rotary International is helping to eradicate. When David met Gaile, he discovered she was on the Board of Directors for Tetra. Since she was his first client, he didn't know how the process would go but quickly found that with one-on-one engagement projects can evolve. "She was very easy to work with," said David, and what he found memorable in the construction of the wine glass holder was routing a fancy edge on the Plexiglas to fit a wineglass. Then she asked if he could also adapt a cup holder to her chair. That's how the project scope changed, as did David's approach.

"The highlight of the project was installing the interchangeable holders and seeing her delight with the end product. That feeling created a thirst to do more!" — David Spears

David hopes that Tetra will be able to attract and retain members when most young people in Vancouver are struggling to purchase a home, much less one that can accommodate a work area. He believes that finding a woodworking shop and a metalworking shop where young members can build devices would be useful for Tetra members. In addition, he'd like to see the volunteer base for Tetra to evolve to include those with specialized skills in electronics.

Tetra Society Student Clubs



Tetra partners with universities and colleges across Canada to engage students in designing and building custom assistive devices for Tetra clients.

Tetra Ottawa is working with Carleton University to establish a new student club where a Tetra coordinator and faculty advisor work with students to design and build custom assistive devices for people's specific needs.

Do you know someone at a university or college who would like to give students an opportunity for practical experience that makes a direct impact in their community? We can help!

Contact Eric Molendyk, National Tetra Coordinator to learn more: eric@tetrasociety.org or call toll-free 1-877-688-8762 or in Vancouver 604-688-6464 ext. 117

TETRA Thanks!

- Al Roadburg Foundation
- Alice and Murray Maitland Foundation
- Alliance Pipeline
- Anna and Edward Churchill Foundation
- BC Rehab Foundation
- Brampton and Caledon Community Foundation
- Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation
- Georgina Foundation
- Guelph Community Foundation
- Hamber Foundation
- Hamilton Community Foundation
- Harold E Ballard Foundation
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- Leonard Foundation
- Province of British Columbia
- Quickturn Production Machining
- The Greygates Foundation
- Shopper Drug Mart Life Foundation
- UMC Charity

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TETRA SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

DEDICATED TO ASSISTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO ACHIEVE AN INDEPENDENT AND FULFILLING LIFE, ONE ASSISTIVE DEVICE AT A TIME

Have an idea for a project? Want to know what's possible? Want to overcome a barrier?

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